

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 5365

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: SENATE ABSOLVES SENATOR ACCUSED OF EXTORTION: EXECUTIVE USE
OF IA-5 FEARED

SUMMARY: THE SENATE VOTE ABSOLVING SENATOR WILSON CAMPOS OF
HARMING "PARLIAMENTARY DECORUM" HAS INCREASED FEARS THAT THE
EXECUTIVE WILL NOW USE IA-5 TO REMOVE HIM FROM OFFICE AND THAT
OTHER, MORE DIRECTLY POLITICAL, CASSATIONS COULD FOLLOW. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A LONG-AWAITED ACTION, THE SENATE JUNE 29 VOTED 29 TO 21
WITH 11 ABSTENTIONS TO ABSOLVE SENATOR WILSON CAMPOS, THE
PERNAMBUCO POLITICIAN ACCUSED BY INDUSTRIALIST CARLOS ALBERTO
MENESES DE SA OF DEMANDING A LARGE CONTRIBUTION TO HIS SON'S
ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IN EXCHANGE FOR APPROVAL OF A LOAN BY THE
PERNAMBUCO DEVELOPMENT BANK, OF THE CHARGE OF HARMING "PARLIAMENTARY
DECORUM". THE CASE, KNOWN AS THE "CASO MORENO" AFTER THE FIRM
FOR WHICH MEMESES SOUGHT THE LOAN, HAD DRAGGED ON FOR MONTHS
AND HAD ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION ON VARIOUS PLANES. (THE
VOTE WAS SECRET, WITH SENATORS FREED BY THEIR PARTIES TO VOTE THEIR
CONSCIENCES.)

2. IN THE EARLY STAGES, OBSERVERS POINTED TO THE HEAVY PRESS
PLAY GIVEN THE ACCUSATION, NOTING THAT THE SUBSTANTIAL EASING
OF CENSORSHIP MEANT THAT A CASE OF THE TYPE WHICH EARLIER MIGHT
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WELL HAVE BEEN HUSHED UP TO THE DETRIMENT OF JUSTICE WAS INSTEAD

RECEIVING FULL PUBLIC ATTENTION. INDEED, CAMPOS CAME TO CLAIM THAT THE VERY SUBSTANTIAL COVERAGE -- WHICH FEATURED A HIGHLY INCRIMINATING

TAPE RECORDING PRODUCED BY MENESSES AND WHICH LEFT A VERY STRONG GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE SENATOR'S GUILT -- HAD SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZED HIS CHANCES OF A FAIR HEARING.

3. THE CASE ACQUIRED A POLITICAL DIMENSION WHEN REPORTS BEGAN TO CIRCULATE TO THE EFFECT THAT IF THE SENATE DID NOT REMOVE CAMPOS FROM OFFICE, THE EXECUTIVE WOULD, USING IA-5, AND THAT OTHER, MORE DIRECTLY POLITICAL, CASSATIONS COULD FOLLOW, WITH ATTENDANT DAMAGE TO THE PROCESS OF DECOMPRESSION. FEARS ALONG THESE LINES WERE HEIGHTENED WHEN A SPECIAL SENATE COMMITTEE REPORTED IN WILSON'S FAVOR (BY A 5-4 MARGIN), AND THE SENATOR, STILL INSISTING ON HIS INNOCENCE, DECLARED HE WOULD NEVER RESIGN.

4. DURING THE WEEK PRECEDING THE FULL SENATE VOTE, AND FOLLOWING WHAT WAS REPORTEDLY SOME DETERMINED AND EFFECTIVE PRIVATE ARMTWISTING BY SENATE PRESIDENT MAGALHAES PINTO, IT BEGAN TO APPEAR THAT CAMPOS WOULD LOSE. LEAVING NOTHING TO CHANCE, PRESTIGIOUS COLUMNIST CARLOS CASTELLO BRANCO'S PIECE ON THE DAY OF THE VOTE POINTEDLY REFERRED TO THE SERIOUS THINGS AT STAKE. THE RESULT, THEN, CAME AS A SURPRISE TO MANY, INCLUDING, BY HIS OWN CONFESSION, SENATE MINORITY LEADER FRANCO MONTORO.

5. COMMENT: IT WILL ALSO, WE HAVE NO DOUBT, BE SERIOUSLY IRRITATING TO CONSERVATIVE CIRCLES WITHIN THE REVOLUTION, ALREADY CONCERNED AND EXERCISED BY THE DECOMPRESSION PROCESS. WE IDENTIFY VARIOUS FACTORS MOTIVATING THOSE WHO VOTED ON CAMPOS' BEHALF, PRIDE IN, OR RATHER ARDOR ON BEHALF OF, THE SENATE'S INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY (ACCORDING TO THIS VIEW, BOTH THAT INTEGRITY AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ARE BETTER SERVED IF THE SENATE, EVEN AT THE COST OF ITS SUBSEQUENT CLOSING, REFUSES TO KNUCKLE UNDER TO EXECUTIVE PRESSURE): FEAR (PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE MDB) FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL FUTURES, LEADING THEM TO SEEK TO KEEP THE PROCESS OF REMOVAL BY THE SENATE OF ONE OF ITS MEMBERS AS DIFFICULT AND AS RARE AS POSSIBLE; SENATORIAL SOLIDARITY (ALSO KNOWN HERE AS "CRONEYISM"); AND, JUST POSSIBLY, LINGERING DOUBTS, ENCOURAGED BY CAMPOS' EXTREMELY EMOTIONAL DEFENSE, AS TO WHETHER HE HAD REALLY GOTTEN A FAIR SHAKE.

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6. NONE OF THESE FACTORS, WE ANTICIPATE, WILL CUT ANY ICE WITHIN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED CONSERVATIVE CIRCLES, PARTICULARLY MILITARY, WHO WILL SEE IN THE SENATE'S ACTION ONLY FURTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THEIR LONG-STANDING CONVICTION THAT POLITICIANS TEND TO BE CORRUPT AND ARE ABSOLUTELY INCAPABLE OF POLICING THEMSELVES.

7. THERE REMAIN, THEN, IN THE NOW-PREVAILING MOOD OF SUSPENSE, TWO QUESTIONS: (1) WHAT WILL THE EXECUTIVE DO TO (OR ABOUT) CAMPOS:

AND (2) ASSUMING IT DOES CASSATE HIM, USING IA-5, WILL IT GO ON
TO CASSATE OTHER PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH REGARD TO
THE FIRST QUESTION, AS WE HAVE INDICATED, THE CURRENT BETTING IS
HEAVY THAT IA-5 WILL BE USED. WITH REGARD TO THE SECOND, WE
NOTE THAT THE ASSERTIONS THAT OTHER CASSATIONS WOULD FOLLOW HAVE
BEEN VAGUE ON JUST WHY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT LIMIT ITSELF TO
THE CASE AT HAND, BUT THERE WOULD BE SOME TACTICAL ADVANTAGE TO
BLENDING A "CORRUPTION CASSATION" WITH OTHER, MORE DIRECTLY POLITICAL
ONES. IN THIS REGARD, IT MAY BE SIGNIFICANT THAT IT HAS BEEN
HEAVILY RUMORED FOR SOME TIME THAT LYSANEAS MACIEL, WIDELY CONSIDERED
THE MDB'S PRINCIPAL LEFTIST IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, WOULD SOON
BE CASSATED, WITH THE SPECIFIC CAUSE BEING A SERIES OF ALLEGEDLY
INFLAMMATORY TALKS DELIVERED AT VARIOUS UNIVERSITIES. END COMMENT.
CRIMMINS

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